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LINCOLN LETTERS

J. G. W.

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NOTE

The letters herein by Lincoln are so thoroughly characteristic of the man, and are in themselves so completely self-explanatory, that it requires no comment to enable the reader fully to understand and appreciate them. It will be observed that the philosophical admonitions in the letter to his brother, Johnston, were written on the same sheet with the letter to his father.

The promptness and decision with which Lincoln despatched the multitudinous affairs of his office during the most turbulent scenes of the Civil War are exemplified in his unequivocal order to the Attorney-General, indorsed on the back of the letter of Hon. Austin A. King, requesting a pardon for John B. Corner. The indorsement bears even date with the letter itself, and Corner was pardoned on the following day.

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Washington, Dec. 24th, 1848.

My dear father: —

Your letter of the 7th was received night before last. I very cheerfully send you the twenty dollars, which sum you say is necessary to save your land from sale. It is singular that you should have forgotten a judgment against you; and it is more singular that the plaintiff should have let you forget it so long, particularly as I suppose you have always had property enough to satisfy a judgment of that amount. Before you pay it, it would be well to be sure you have not paid it; or, at least, that you can not prove you have paid it. Give my love to Mother, and all the connections.

Affectionately your son,
A. LINCOLN.

[Written on same page with above.]

Dear Johnston: —

Your request for eighty dollars, I do not think it best to comply with now. At the various times when I have helped you a little, you have said to me, "We can get along very well

now," but in a very short time I find you in the same difficulty again. Now this can only happen by some defect in your conduct. What that defect is, I think I know. You are not *lazy*, and still you *are* an *idler*. I doubt whether since I saw you, you have done a good whole day's work, in any one day. You do not very much dislike to work, and still you do not work much, merely because it does not seem to you that you could get much for it. This habit of uselessly wasting time, is the whole difficulty; and it is vastly important to you, and still more so to your children, that you should break this habit. It is more important to them, because they have longer to live, and can keep out of an idle habit before they are in it easier than they can get out after they are in.

You are now in need of some ready money; and what I propose is, that you shall go to work, "tooth and nail," for somebody who will give you money for it. Let father and your boys take charge of things at home — prepare for a crop, and make the crop; and you go to work for the best money wages, or in discharge of any debt you owe, that you can get. And to secure you a fair reward for your labor, I now promise you that for every dollar you will, between this

Washington, Dec. 24th 1848.

My dear father:

Your letter of the 7th was received night before last. I very cheerfully send you the twenty dollars, which, I am sure you say is necessary to save your land from sale. It is singular that you should have forgotten a judgment against you; and it is more singular that the plaintiff should have let you forget it so long, particularly as, I suppose you have always had property enough to satisfy a judgment of that amount. Before you pay it, it would be well to be sure you have not paid it, or at least, that you can not prove you have paid it. Give my love to Mother, and all the connections.

Affectionately yours

Abraham Lincoln

Dear Johnston:

Your request for eighty dollars, I do not think it best to comply with now. At the various times, when I have helped you a little, you have said to me "we can get along very well now" but in a very short time I find you in the same difficulty again. Now this can only happen by some defect in your management. What that defect is, I think I know. You are not busy, and still you are an idler.

I doubt whether since I saw you, you have done a good
whole day's work, in any one day. - You do not very much
dislike to work, and still you do not work much, merely
because it does not seem to you that you could get much
for it. - This habit of uselessly wasting time, is the whole
difficulty, and it is vastly important to you, and still
more so to your ^{children}, that you should break this habit. - It
is more important to them, because they have longer to live, and
can keep out of an idle habit before they are in it, easier
than they can get out after they are in.

You are now in need of some ready money, and what I
propose is that you shall go to work, 'tooth and nail' for
somebody who will give you money for it. - Let father and
your boys be in charge of things at home - prepare for a crop,
and make the crop; and you go to work for the best money
wages, or in discharge of any debt you are, that you can get. -
And to secure you a fair reward for your labor, I now promise you
that for every dollar you will, between this and the first
of next May, get for your own labor either in money, or in your
own indebtedness, I will then give you one other dollar. -
By this, if you hire yourself at ten dollars a month, from now
you will get ten more, making twenty dollars a month for
your work. In this, I do not mean you shall go off to
St. Louis, or the lead mines, or the gold mines, in California,
but I mean for you to go at it for the best wages you

can get close to home — no boots, corn, &c. Now if you
will do this, you will soon be out of debt and what
is better you will have a habit that will keep you from
getting in debt again — But if I should clear you
out, next year you will be just as deep in debt — You
say you would sell your place in Heaven for \$70 or \$80 —
Then you value your place in Heaven very cheap for I am
with the offer I make you
sure you can get the money or eighty dollars for four or five
months work — You say if I furnish you the money you will
sell me the land, but if you don't pay the money back
you will deliver possession — Nonsense! If you can't now
live with the land, how will you then live without it?
You have always been true to me, and I do not now mean
to be untrue to you — On the contrary, if you will but follow
my advice, you will find it worth more than eighty times
eighty dollars to you —

Affectionately

Your brother

A. Lincoln

and the first of next May, get for your own labor either in money or in your own indebtedness, I will then give you one other dollar. By this, if you hire yourself at ten dollars a month, from me you will get ten more, making twenty dollars a month for your work. In this, I do not mean you shall go off to St. Louis, or the lead mines, or the gold mines, in California, but I mean for you to go at it for the best wages you can get close to home, in Coles County. Now if you will do this, you will soon be out of debt, and what is better, you will have a habit that will keep you from getting in debt again. But if I should now clear you out, next year you will be just as deep in as ever. You say you would almost give your place in Heaven for \$70 or \$80. Then you value your place in Heaven very cheaply, for I am sure you can with the offer I make you get the seventy or eighty dollars for four or five months' work. You say if I furnish you the money you will deed me the land, and if you don't pay the money back, you will deliver possession — Nonsense! If you can't now live *with* the land, how will you then live without it? You have always been kind to me, and I do not now mean to be unkind to you. On the contrary, if you will but follow my advice, you will find it

worth more than eight times eighty dollars to you.

Affectionately your brother,
A. LINCOLN.

Executive Mansion,
Washington, April 30, 1864.

Lieutenant-General Grant,—

Not expecting to see you again before the spring campaign opens, I wish to express, in this way, my entire satisfaction with what you have done up to this time, so far as I understand it. The particulars of your plans I neither know, or seek to know. You are vigilant and self-reliant; and, pleased with this, I wish not to obtrude any constraints or restraints upon you. While I am very anxious that any great disaster, or the capture of our men in great numbers, shall be avoided, I know these points are less likely to escape your attention than they would be mine. If there is anything wanting which is within my power to give, do not fail to let me know it.

And now with a brave Army, and a just cause, may God sustain you.

Yours very truly,
A. LINCOLN.

Executive Mansion

Washington, April 30. 1864

Lieutenant General Grant.

Not expecting to see you again before the Spring campaign opens, I wish to express, in this way, my entire satisfaction with what you have done up to this time, so far as I understand it. The particulars of your plans I neither know, or seek to know. You are vigilant and self-reliant; and, pleased with this, I wish not to obtrude any constraints or restraints upon you. While I am very anxious that any great disaster, or the capture of our men in great numbers, shall be avoided, I know these points are less likely to escape your attention than they would be mine. If there is anything wanting which is within my power to give, do not fail to let me know it.

And now with a brave Army, and a just cause, may God sustain you.

Yours very truly
A. Lincoln.

Washington

July 27. 1864

President Lincoln

Dear Sir

I write to
request of you the pardon
of John B. Garner of
Nash county, N.C. who
stands indicted in the
U. States court in Misson
-rie for a conspiracy aga-
inst the Government.
Mr. Garner was among
those who first went into
the rebellion, but sud-
denly returned home,
seeing his error & the great
wrong he had commit-
-ted. Long after he had re-
-turned, taken the oath

of all grace and
given a bond for his
future good conduct.
He was indicted by the
grand jury at St. Louis
for his offence at the first
cut throat of the rebellion.

I am sure it will not be
an act of misplaced
clemency if you will
now pardon him, and
I most respectfully solicit
it, which I do because I
know the man.

I am respectfully
Austin M. King
Jl of Rep.

John B. Conner

Attorney General
pleas make out
a pardon in this
case.

A. Lincoln

Jan. 27, 1864

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